THE GLOBE AND MAIL

SE National

HD **Evening Update: Russia seeks to expand war by bolstering ranks with foreign combatants; Also: False narratives about the war in Ukraine are being spread widely in China; and Canada's unemployment rate nears a record low**

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Good evening, let's start with today's top stories:

Russia has now killed more civilians than soldiers, say Ukrainian authorities, while Moscow seeks to expand the war by bolstering its ranks with foreign combatants.

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Russia on Friday said it would welcome "applications" by more than 16,000 Middle Eastern fighters to join its invasion of Ukraine.

As well, false narratives pushed by Moscow about the war in Ukraine are being spread widely in China , boosted by Chinese officials and state media even as Beijing purports to remain neutral.

Meanwhile, across the Canadian Prairies, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been deeply felt – especially within farming communities . Farmers, many of them Ukrainian-Canadian, have in recent weeks hosted rallies, raised money and attempted to secure the safety of family and friends back home.

Opinion and analysis:

* Molly McCarron: In Vladimir Putin's Russia, the doors to the world are closing

* Doug Saunders: The forgotten victims of Putin's war: Young Russian men

* David Shribman: At what point do we consider this a Third World War?

* Michael Czobit: Send Putin to Ukrainian Saturday school

* Pat Carney: To my fellow refugee children: You will never truly forget your flight from home

Related:

* G7, EU nations increase sanctions against Russia with removal of "most favoured nation" trading status

* How NATO jets are tracking Russian bombing missions in amazing detail

Canada's unemployment rate nears a record low on latest hiring binge

Canada's labour market bounced back sharply in February, more than recouping the jobs that were lost when the Omicron variant of COVID-19 ripped through the economy.

The country added 337,000 jobs last month , following a decrease of 200,000 in January, Statistics Canada said Friday. The unemployment rate fell to 5.5 per cent from 6.5 per cent, taking it near a record low that was set months before the pandemic began. A hiring binge was expected in February, but nowhere near as much as what took place. The median estimate from Bay Street analysts was a gain of roughly 125,000 positions.

Statistics Canada says the ratio of household debt to disposable income hit a record level in the fourth quarter as mortgage borrowing rose and disposable income fell.

On a seasonally adjusted basis, household credit market debt as a proportion of household disposable income rose to 186.2 per cent in the fourth quarter, compared with a revised reading of 180.4 per cent for the third quarter. The reading means there was $1.86 in credit market debt for every dollar of household disposable income.

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ALSO ON OUR RADAR

Canada to unveil "robust package" to modernize NORAD continental defence, Defence Minister Anita Anand says

Anand says the Canadian government will soon unveil a significant spending plan to help modernize continental defences under NORAD, a revamp the United States has been seeking for years.

B.C. coroner says January was third-deadliest month for drug deaths

The British Columbia Coroners Service says at least 207 people died because of toxic illicit drugs in January. Chief coroner Lisa Lapointe says in a statement the figure is the third-highest toll recorded in a calendar month since a public health emergency was declared in 2016.

Technical malfunction leads to India accidentally firing missile into Pakistan

India said on Friday it had accidentally fired a missile into Pakistan this week because of a "technical malfunction" during routine maintenance, giving its version of events after Pakistan summoned India's envoy to protest. Tensions have eased in recent months, and the incident, which may have been the first of its kind, immediately raised questions about safety mechanisms .

Texas top court deals blow to clinics seeking to block abortion law

Texas's high court on Friday effectively ended a challenge by clinics to a state law that banned most abortions by ruling that state officials including those tasked with doctor licensing have no role in enforcing the law.

Margaret Atwood shows no sign of stopping

Margaret Atwood, 82, revealed in an interview this week that she is finishing the manuscript of a collection of stories and, after that, will begin a "tell-all literary memoir."

MARKET WATCH

Major U.S. and Canadian stock indexes stumbled on Friday as tech and growth shares led a broad decline and investors worried about the conflict in Ukraine while attention turned to the Federal Reserve's policy meeting next week.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 229.88 points, or 0.69 per cent, to 32,944.19, the S&P 500 lost 55.21 points, or 1.30 per cent, to 4,204.31 and the Nasdaq Composite dropped 286.15 points, or 2.18 per cent, to 12,843.81.

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The S&P/TSX Composite Index fell 119.87 points or 0.56 per cent to 21,461.83. The loonie traded for 78.62 U.S. cents.

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TALKING POINTS

Lessons from two years of pandemic living

"On this day of March 11, designated as the National Day of Observance by the Canadian government to commemorate the people who lost their lives to COVID-19, we've largely opted to forget and carry on as if the pandemic is over. As much as we don't want to hear this, it's not." – André Picard

North Americans have already used up their share of the planet's resources for the year. It's clear that climate action needs a reboot

"You may have absorbed the message that, if you care about the planet, the onus is on you to be sustainable. Somehow, it seems up to us as individuals to become carbon neutral, plastic-free and zero-impact. Every bit helps, but we can't win that way. According to ecological footprint calculators, even perfect eco-angels would consume two planets' production of resources if living in North America." – Kai Chan

My advice to Ukrainians, from one refugee mother to another

"I have survived three wars as a mother – the Iraq-Iran War, the Gulf War, and the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. So I speak from one knowing heart to another when I say this to the mothers of Ukraine: No words will alleviate your grief, nor compensate for your loss from this war. It will end, but its ramifications will live on. But hopefully, you will not go through what we went through." – Yasmine Mousa

Alberta's safe-supply committee is missing an opportunity to protect people from harm

"While governments across Canada have largely been sitting on the sidelines as this crisis has unfolded, Alberta's United Conservative Party has taken an aggressive stance against people who use drugs by actively opposing harm-reduction interventions, targeting both evidence-based supervised injection sites and injectable opioid agonist treatment programs." – Zoe Dodd, Eris Nyx, Corey Ranger and Mark Tyndall

LIVING BETTER

Thinking about getting bangs? "Longer, more grown out, feathery face framing bangs" are in, according to Toronto stylist Morgan Tully. If you're considering a fancy fringe, ask your hairdresser for a lesson in styling, suggests Tully. And as the front of your hair tends to get greasy faster, invest in a good dry shampoo or simply wash your bangs separately to keep them looking their best .

TODAY'S LONG READ

B.C. flower farmers flee to Nova Scotia to escape climate change

Early last December, Sarah and Carl Kistner packed a 20-foot U-Haul and a Ford Transit van with thousands of dahlia tubers and drove from Nelson, B.C. to Granville Ferry, N.S. It was a dicey move – the U-Haul didn't have snow tires, and they knew if sub-zero weather penetrated the vehicles it would spell certain death for their delicate bulbs.

But staying put was the biggest risk of all. They, like others who have recently left British Columbia, were running from climate change, which has contributed to devastating and increasingly frequent floods and wildfires in the province. Read the full story .

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